**Achilles Tendon Rupture**

**Definition:** The Achilles tendon is a thick band that attaches your calf muscle to your heel bone. The Achilles tendon can rupture if the tension from a sudden, forceful contraction of the calf muscle becomes too great. This often occurs in stop-and-go activities like tennis or basketball.

**Common Terms:** The most common term is Achilles tendon rupture.

![Achilles Tendon](image)

**Typical Mechanism of Injury:** These tears are most commonly seen in males over 30 years of age, but can happen to anyone. Typically these tears are not preventable as they occur from a sudden forceful contraction of the muscle causing the tendon to tear.

**Common Signs and Symptoms:** The back of the lower leg will be painful, swollen and will have an obvious deformity. Individuals often describe feeling a “pop”, “snap” or a “kick” in the back of the leg as if someone hit them in the calf with a baseball bat or other hard object.

**Common Treatment:** The initial treatment for an Achilles tendon rupture is to immobilize the foot and ankle in a splint for support and comfort. Surgery is usually recommended although occasionally these ruptures are treated without surgery. The time spent in a cast and not walking may be much longer if surgery is not performed. Surgery is usually more predictable in assuring a good outcome in most patients. If surgery is recommended it is usually performed within a week or so of the injury and a period of immobilization in a cast is required after the surgery. Medication for pain control, ice and elevation are all helpful in controlling pain afterwards.

**Prevention:** Strengthening and stretching are the easiest ways to help prevent an Achilles rupture. Though this does not assure that a tear will not occur, healthy tissue is less likely to tear compared to unhealthy tissue. One should also avoid rigorous activity while suffering from chronic Achilles tendinitis.

**Expectations:** Surgery is usually the best option, followed by a six-month rehabilitation program. Rehabilitation compliance is critically important to a successful outcome. Occasionally non-surgical options are available.